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FOR ACTION

COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY NOTE**

El Salvador

SUMMARY

The Executive Director presents the country programme strategy note for El Salvador for a programme of cooperation for the period 1997 to 2001.

UNICEF cooperation during this period will support the Government and organizations of civil society in their efforts to improve the well-being of children and women in accordance with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the national programme of action (NPA). Monitoring of the NPA shows that the goals for health are achievable. However, the lack of policies and adequate financial resources as well as institutional weaknesses and regional disparities have hampered the fulfilment of the goals for nutrition, education and water supply and sanitation. In this context, the overall objectives of the proposed programme are (a) to ensure that the commitments enshrined in the Convention and the NPA are effectively translated into policies, institutional development and additional resource allocations for programmes benefiting women and children; and (b) to advocate for and support the Government in the achievement of the decade goals. UNICEF cooperation will support a national-level social policy and planning programme and an integrated area-based programme.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its third regular session of 1996.

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THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN

1. The Peace Accords, signed in 1992, included consensus on a National Reconstruction Plan (NRP), an Economic and Social Agreement and an increased commitment to human rights and democracy as the basis for long-term reconstruction and development. The NRP identified 115 priority municipalities seriously affected by the conflict where social indicators are lower than the national average and where basic services coverage is limited.

2. Progress achieved to date in the implementation of the Peace Accords - increased allotments of public resources to social development during 1992-1995 and the Government's commitment to finance future efforts in the social sectors - are all opportunities for improving the situation of children and women and reducing social disparities. However, the possibilities of advancing peace and democracy could be threatened by a reduction in external remittances (10 per cent of gross domestic product), a possible decline in the amount of foreign aid in future years ($400 million over the last four years) and a funding gap of $600 million to cover commitments of the Peace Accord.

3. The national programme of action (NPA), adopted in 1991, and the current country programme of cooperation for the period 1992-1996 are fully consistent with the Peace Accords and have benefited from increased external assistance and government allocations for the social sectors. Monitoring of the NPA shows that the targets established for the mid-decade goals have been achieved in the following areas: infant and child mortality reduction; polio eradication; measles deaths; immunization and water supply and sanitation coverage; and primary school enrolment. However, serious efforts still need to be made to achieve and sustain NPA goals related to maternal mortality reduction, exclusive breast-feeding, malnutrition, the use of oral rehydration therapy, acute respiratory infections (ARI), the elimination of vitamin A and iodine deficiency disorders, neonatal tetanus and measles eradication. In addition, greater efforts are still required to reduce disparities in those municipalities identified in the NRP and where social indicators are still lagging behind the national average.

4. More than 50 per cent of the estimated total population of 5.1 million live in poverty, with the poorest 20 per cent of the population receiving only 4 per cent of national income while 53 per cent is earned by the wealthiest 20 per cent. Disparities are even higher in the rural areas.

5. The major causes of infant and child mortality are ARI, diarrhoeal diseases and perinatal disorders. Seventy per cent of breast-feeding mothers wean their children before six months of age and 23 per cent of children under five years of age suffer some degree of malnutrition. Of those, an estimated 11 per cent are moderately or severely under weight. Nutritional problems are closely related to poverty conditions as well as to inadequate nutrition education. Water coverage in rural areas - 45 per cent - is one half of that in urban areas. This is aggravated by the destruction of 99 per cent of the primary rain forest, soil erosion and pollution of 60 per cent of the rivers. National pre-school coverage is only 25 per cent and the average school grade attained in rural areas is 2.8, one half of that in urban areas. Only 30 per cent of all children complete sixth grade.

6. The social situation of women is strongly affected by their subordinated political status and gender discrimination. Maternal mortality rates are high

at 158 per 100,000 live births in 1994. Women have an average of 3.8 children; however, this figure increases to 4.5 in rural areas. An estimated 26 per cent of households are headed by women. Around 40 per cent of women over the age of 15 years in rural areas are illiterate as compared to the national average of 31 per cent.

7. Since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in May 1990, the Salvadorean Institute for the Protection of Minors has been established and a National Minors Policy has been developed. An analysis of the degree to which child protection rights are enforced reveals that there have been important legal and institutional developments. None the less, as highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, further progress is required to implement the Convention effectively. This is partially reflected by the following: 2,000 children are institutionalized, mostly as a result of abandonment or poverty; 2,235 adolescents are being held pending lawsuits for various felonies; and an estimated 117,493 children between 10-19 years of age are working, with a high percentage of these below the age of 15. In addition, 5,000 young people have been left disabled by the war, not counting the almost 2,000 children disabled from other causes.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST COOPERATION

8. The large number of programmes and projects has led to a dispersion of activities, thereby limiting effective programme coordination and impact. A more streamlined approach should be developed in the future programme of cooperation. The integrated basic services programme has been effective in facilitating targeted interventions in 39 priority municipalities and this programme should be expanded. The Convention on the Rights of the Child goes beyond the scope of the children in especially difficult circumstances programme and should serve as a framework for all programmes. Weaknesses of counterparts in organization, planning, management, financial implementation and reporting have highlighted the need to further strengthen institutions and build capacity at national and local levels to ensure sustainability of programme interventions. The Government's preparation of a country strategy note, while not yet finalized, has been helpful in identifying specific components for inter-agency cooperation. Social mobilization experience gained during the current programme has enhanced UNICEF credibility nationally and has demonstrated the potential for building effective networks and alliances with various partners and sectors of Salvadorean society.

PROPOSED COUNTRY PROGRAMME STRATEGY

9. The 1994-1999 Economic and Social Development Plan (ESDP) includes in its objectives the goals of the NPA, as well as the reduction of disparities and the consolidation of peace, democracy and the respect for human rights. Many of the NPA goals are related directly to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The ESDP incorporates four main strategies: (a) to focus social policy and financial resources on those most in need; (b) to decentralize the Government's service delivery and increase inter-institutional coordination; (c) to achieve private and community participation in addressing social needs as a complement to the role played by the Government; and (d) to foster the modernization of the State with an emphasis on social sector reforms.

10. The proposed Government of El Salvador/UNICEF programme of cooperation for the period 1997-2001 aims to support the Government and organizations of civil society in implementing the above-mentioned strategies to improve the well-being of children and women. Monitoring of the NPA shows that goals for health are achievable, but the lack of policies, regulatory framework, institutional capacity and adequate financial resources hampers the attainment of those for nutrition, education and water supply and sanitation. Thus, greater emphasis will be placed on the latter goals in the future programme of cooperation as well as on the reduction of disparities in 41 priority municipalities.

11. Strategies include technical assistance for strengthening the capacity of Government, NGOs and communities to formulate and manage policies and programmes for women and children as part of an ongoing process of sectoral reform. Empowerment will focus on municipalities and communities to reduce disparities through the delivery of integrated basic services at the local level. At the same time, social mobilization and advocacy will cultivate sustainable governmental, non-governmental organization (NGO), community and private sector leadership for achieving the NPA goals by mobilizing increased public and private resources for children and putting the rights of children and women higher on the political, economic and social agendas of state and civil society. Social mobilization, advocacy and a gender equity approach will be cross-cutting strategies of the country programme. Additionally, the cooperation will support and complement subregional initiatives in Central America. The Social Integration Treaty signed in San Salvador on 31 March 1995 during the XVI Central American Presidential Summit also provides an important opportunity for cooperation among countries as part of a coordinated approach through regional programmes for the solution of major social problems.

12. Social policy and planning. Major areas of intervention are (a) child and women's rights; (b) social reform; and (c) monitoring and evaluation. The child and women's rights component will support the development of legislation and the necessary regulatory framework for ensuring that it is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also will promote community-based, preventive programmes aimed at protecting children and adolescents at risk. In the area of women's rights, UNICEF support will aim to increase public awareness of the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Support also will be provided for the revision of criminal and labour codes to ensure consistency with the Convention and the adoption of gender-sensitive policies on subjects related to women's education, health and income equality in accordance with the Plan of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. Major partners will include the National Family Secretariat, the Salvadorean Institute for the Protection of Children, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, the Ministry of Labour, the Division of Social and Economic Policy, the Congressional Commission for the Family, Women and Children and the working group of NGOs represented in Congress.

13. Within the context of the health and education sector reform currently supported by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, UNICEF will support the development of policies, programme guidelines, norms and training for sustaining and achieving NPA health and education goals. An increased allocation from the public budget for those goals will be an important indicator for monitoring their progress. The monitoring and evaluation component will strengthen national capacity for monitoring both NPA goals and the situation of children and women, including trends in the reduction of poverty and disparities. A special monitoring system to follow up compliance with Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women also will be implemented. Additionally, at the local level, support will be given to the Salvadorean Institute for Municipal Development to strengthen local information systems and the monitoring of progress in relation to NPA goals, as well as to compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in the 41 selected municipalities.

14. Integrated area-based programme. This programme will be expanded and consolidated in 41 of the 115 priority municipalities identified in the NRP. The objective of the programme, which will be implemented within the framework of the decentralization process taking place in the country, is to strengthen municipal- and community-level capacity for the planning, monitoring and delivery of an integrated basic services package for improving the conditions of children and women. The success of municipal interventions will be measured against progress towards the achievement of the NPA targets in each municipality. The specific strategies to promote sustainability will include (a) convergence of service delivery using water supply and sanitation projects as an entry point for the implementation of education, nutrition and health projects in an integrated manner; (b) capacity-building for social planning and monitoring; (c) development and expansion of cost-effective technologies; (d) community participation and cost-sharing of capital and recurrent costs of basic services; (e) empowerment of community-based organizations using a gender approach and through access to information, knowledge, skills and financial resources; (f) promotion of private sector participation in the delivery of basic services at the local level; and (g) establishment of an organizational mechanism to enhance interaction between the national and area-based programmes.

ESTIMATED PROGRAMME BUDGET

Estimated programme cooperation, 1997-2001 a/
(In thousands of United States dollars)

	General resources	Supplementary funds	Total
Social policy	1 825	4 675	6 500
Area-based programme	3 175	12 325	15 500
Total	5 000	17 000	22 000

a/ These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.